

IJA News & Muse
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MAY ACTIVITIES

MAY 16, 1 PM, BONSAI TECHNIQUES STUDY

GROUP, Magruder Farm

Bring trees to work on.

MAY 19, 7 PM, DES MOINES MEETING

Des Moines Botanical Center

Pots and pot selection presented by Larry Totten.

Choosing the right pot for the right tree will be discussed. Everything you ever wanted to know about pots and pot selection, but were afraid to ask, will be discussed. Bring your own odd or old and antique pots for show and tell.

Bring any pot you would like to have holes drilled in. Mike Dullard will be there with special drill bits and he will drill drainage holes or wire holes in any pot you bring.

Tree of the Month: Maple. *Bring a maple. Bring any tree-we welcome questions.*

EIBA News

Andy Smith brought great material and gave two fine workshops in April. Everyone went home happy with a great tree!

We have our first show of the year coming up on Mother's Day at Noelridge. Bring a tree or two to share.

May 7 Board Mtg HyVee 6:30

May 10 Mother's Day Show Noelridge 10 am

May 16 Workday at Noelridge 10 am

May 21 Club Meeting "Watering and Fertilizing" Ron Dias plans to make "cakes"!

TIMELY TIPS

Temperate trees should be outside by now enjoying the sunshine. Wait until the nighttime temperatures are above 55 degrees to put tropical trees outdoors. Choose your siting carefully and watch as the sun

changes its position to take advantage of it's rays. Also be sure to turn your trees regularly so they get good sun from all directions and don't grow one sided.

Some trees like a bit of protection from the wind. I use bungee cords to secure some of my taller trees to their benches after having several sail off the bench in a storm and break some critical branches (and pots).

Check your trees daily to see if they need water. Growing trees take up more water and wind can also dry them out. Most trees should be on a regular fertilizing schedule by now. I wait until the candles on white pines and other mountain pines have hardened off before I fertilize them to keep the needles short. Black pines should be kept well watered and fertilized as their candles develop. In a few weeks you can cut the candles on healthy black pines to encourage shorter needles and budding back on the branches.

Deciduous trees are growing rapidly now. Keep the new shoots pinched back to 2-4 leaves. This will encourage ramification and shorter internodes. If you want to develop a thicker branch let it grow wild and it will develop more rapidly. It may look a little unsightly but keep in mind the results you hope to achieve. We can't keep all of our trees in show condition and have them develop the characteristics we see that they lack.

You can wire deciduous trees now, especially new growth that has hardened enough. Keep in mind that they are growing rapidly and you can get wire scars if you don't watch them carefully.

Watch for pests as they seem to grow as quickly as your trees. I spray all of my trees when I put them outside and then repeat it in about 10 days. Aphids are good at hiding under leaves so check underneath them frequently. I also spray any landscape trees and shrubs in the vicinity, especially for mites and aphids.

Happiness is not a goal; it is a by-product. -Eleanor Roosevelt, diplomat and author (1884-1962)

LARRY TOTTEN'S ONCE A YEAR BONSAI BLOG

Developing a few show quality trees is a goal of mine, but in the meantime, I am always self-satisfied after finding and containerizing a truck load of new old stumps. This spring I dived into the shrubbery surrounding a county park golf course.

They had asked for public help in ridding the course boundary of honeysuckles. I read that they transplant easily with virtually no top and no roots, so I volunteered to dig a few before they tore the rest out.

That was Easter weekend (April 11th.) Now, the first week of May, most of the double and triple trunked stumps have budded out all over the place. I am ecstatic! I'll bring a couple to the May meeting and work them into my pot selection discussion. Before then, read what Nick Lenz has to say about honeysuckles in, "Bonsai from the Wild." You will be able to see first hand several of the facts he highlights. I'll bring my copy to the meeting.

My ginkgo seeds have not sprouted yet. I planted the mother tree about 23 years ago and just a couple years ago it began producing seed. My sense of smell is not so great anymore, but I hear this is a good thing when it comes to handling the fresh seeds. I left them outdoors under slight cover for the winter, and placed them, cleaned, into little plant pots a couple months ago. They're outside again now, well see what happens. The little ginkgo Helene displayed at the Rieman Gardens show last fall really caught my attention.

The recent workshop with Andy Smith was a great one to observe. I paid the bargain price to just stalk around "silently." I'm a little tired by 7.00 pm so sitting back most of the time and observing was just right. Andy is the same in person as he is "on stage." You can see him in a great DVD about collecting trees in the Black Hills, available from our club library.

Alan's tall bald cypress trees, east of the drive, were barely beginning to bud out at the time of the workshop (April 28th). I don't think any of the three collected by club members this spring have shown much sign of life yet. Helene had a formal upright bald cypress in her collection, maybe 18" tall, leafing out and looking stately.

If you happen to have a mugo pine over twenty years old in your landscape, it may still only have leggy branches. My two are like that. But search a few inches into the soil and you may find a surprising trunk girth. I was indeed shocked as I moved one recently. Ron H. says it is a common trait (the underground girth, not the shock). I hope to demo one of my two at the Botanical Center show next spring. I'm going to let the roots adjust their nursery container this year.

I'll leave my adventures with an eight year old catalpa for telling, and hopefully showing in a couple more years. I should have it shrunk to a height of only 4 beans by then. But I'm referring to catalpa "beans." I think this will be another "garden monstrosity," in Ivan's opinion. But the city wanted me to cut it down from "curbside" (this is Granger?), so why not try....

Oh, bring pots to the May meeting if you want drainage or wire holes drilled. This will be a club first, thanks to Mike Dullard.

End of annual blog.

TIPS ON COLLECTING

by Eric Newton

Here are some collecting tools that I recommend: strong shovel, sharp saw (ideally, one for roots & another for the top (as the saw used for roots tends to dull rather quickly)), long handled loppers (again, it is best to have one for the roots & one for the top; the long handles help prevent "pokes" from thorns & branches and makes it easier to get to the roots down in the hole), small gardening rake and/or root hook (to remove weeds & such from the base of the tree), wet long fibered sphagnum moss (to wrap around the roots to keep them moist for the ride home), burlap or plastic to wrap the root ball, string or twine to tie the root ball, & some- thing to help get it back to the car like a wheelbarrow or backpack if collecting large stock.

Here are some collecting hints- FIND A SUITABLE TREE-look for a strong base & check for good surface roots by cleaning away the weeds & surface soil with your rake or root hook. If digging an evergreen, look for branches that can be used in your future design. If working on a deciduous tree, you can just look for a good trunk & root base as you can re-grow all the branches. CUT OFF ALL NON-ESSENTIAL BRANCHES-look at the top of the tree & cut off all non-essential branches. With a

Maple, Elm, Honeysuckle, etc, you may remove everything but a portion of the trunk & then you'll regrow all branches in the future.

For Junipers, Yews, Pines, etc you need to leave some existing branches or you will kill the tree. It is a good idea to leave more foliage than you need in the future as this helps root formation in evergreens. The key is to remove enough to make the tree lighter & leave the branches in the woods rather than hauling them home & having to dispose of them.

Next, YOU NEED TO DIG! The general rule is to dig around the drip line of the shrub. The drip line would be the edges of the foliage or where water drips down off the plant. I like to dig the first circle around the base to just sever roots, then dig a second circle out further (8-12 inches back) and remove the soil up to the first circle. Once this is done all the way around the tree, grab the top of the tree & see if it is loose. If so, then pull it from the hole. If it is not loose, try to see where roots are still attached & cut accordingly. You may need to dig deeper to get access to the tap root(s). If you run into roots that you can't get through with the shovel you should then use the loppers or the root saw.

I try to remove some soil to make the whole thing lighter. Some of the original soil should be retained if collecting an evergreen. Some people recommend leaving this field soil intact & potting it with the tree. I, however, have had problems watering properly when the sticky field soil remains in the middle of the root ball & free- draining soil on the outside; how do you know when to water?

With deciduous trees, I spray ALL of the existing soil away & put into good free draining soil. With evergreens I try to remove the large clumps of soil but leave some of this soil around the fine feeder roots. I retain some of the old soil & mix into my soil. This "inoculates" the soil with mycorrhiza (beneficial bacteria).

It is best to have your soil & training pot ready BEFORE you collect. If not, you should then put the collected tree into the wheel barrow or a bucket, making sure to submerge the roots with water to prevent drying out. This also ensures that the roots & tree have plenty of water to start with. Lately, I have been using unsifted soil for newly collected trees. I have been using 6 parts aged Pine to 2 parts # 3 chicken grit. The key is to use deeper pots with great drainage to prevent the soil from

staying water-logged for too long.

I have also put some Yews into straight aged Pine bark; they seem to be doing fine as well. It is tough to know how big a training pot you will need until you get the tree out of the ground, so it is best to have several sizes on hand (or have wood ready to make the size you need). I have found that plastic mesh nursery flats lined with drywall mesh tape works great! Most nurseries will give them to you for free, they're strong, & they provide great drainage.

Make sure you clean up the cut roots; damaged & torn roots do not heal as well as clean cut roots. Get rid of as many large roots as possible while keeping as many small feeder roots as possible. Sometimes you will have to keep large roots and just prune the ends to force back-budding (and then cut them off during later re- potting). Make sure to keep enough roots to support the tree (there are no generalizations as every tree is different; you can only learn by doing).

This article was reprinted with permission from the author from OMAKE, April 2009, the Kalamazoo, MI club newsletter.

ODDS AND ENDS

I mentioned last month that we were planning to attend the Shohin convention in Collinsville, IL hosted by the St. Louis bonsai club. Five of our club members attended and had a great time. There was a very nice show of shohin trees, top artists, workshops with the best trees I have ever seen, and several vendors. Everything was in one large room so participants could watch any or all of the workshops, admire the show and shop.

The headliner for the event was a substitute for his father who had hurt his back. He was Taiga (I thought they were saying Tiger which fit) Urushibata from Japan. Tiaga had spent six years as an apprentice to Kimura so was extremely well qualified for the job. His workshop participants came away with some exquisite little trees. Ivan Hanthorn participated in both his workshops and I hope he will share his results with the club.

Following the convention Andy Smith did two workshops for the Cedar Rapids club and two for the Des Moines club. The results were some of the best we have ever had.